



Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District

Rock Island County SWCD Spring 2020 Newsletter

www.RockIslandSWCD.org

Illinois EPA Awards \$180,000 to Rock Island Soil and Water Conservation District for Implementation of the Copperas Creek Watershed-Based Plan

Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a Section 319(h) grant from the Illinois EPA. The total project cost is \$301,160, with Illinois EPA providing 60 percent or \$180,044 in grant funds and local landowners and partners (Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District) providing 40 percent, or \$121,116 in match. This is the second round of funding provided to the District for implementation of the watershed plan. Implementation will occur beginning Spring, 2020 through Fall, 2021.

This grant continues the voluntary implementation of the Copperas Creek Watershed-Based Plan, which addresses stormwater and nonpoint source (NPS) pollution issues in the watershed that drains into Copperas Creek in Rock Island County, and is a direct tributary to the Mississippi River. NPS pollution occurs when runoff from rain and snowmelt carries pollutants into waterways such as rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and even groundwater.

The Copperas Creek Watershed is comprised of 47,000 acres in western Rock Island County. A majority of the watershed is cultivated crop agriculture, with a smaller portion dedicated to pasture and forest area. The watershed has no urban areas. The project will assist local landowners to voluntarily implement best management practices (BMPs) in the watershed to reduce nonpoint source pollution, soil erosion, and nutrient and sediment loadings in order to improve water quality.

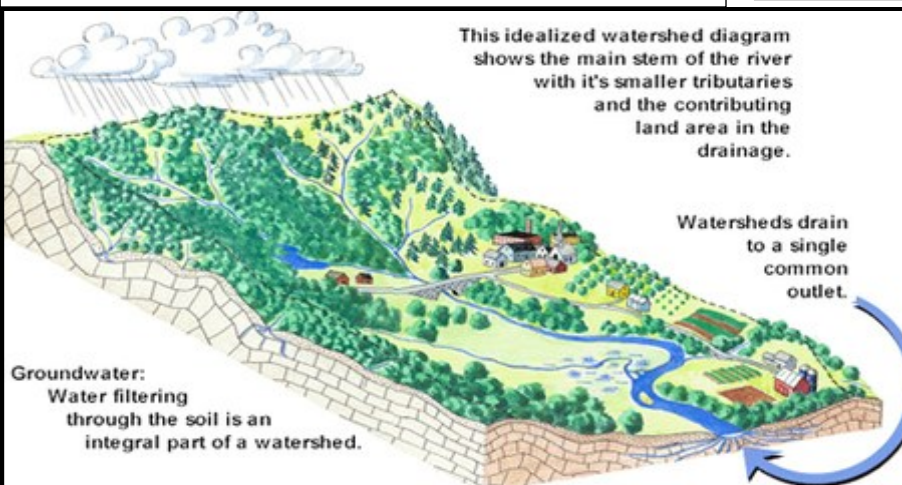
The BMPs eligible for cost-share include:

- Dry Dam
- Grade Stabilization Structure
- Grassed Waterway
- Streambank Stabilization
- Water and Sediment Control Basin
- Denitrifying Bioreactor
- Saturated Buffer
- 2 - Stage Ditch

Resource Conservationist Rich Stewart with the Rock Island SWCD states, "Interest is high among landowners in Copperas Creek for installing conservation practices. No-till farming and grassed waterways are common practices used by farmers. Many farmers have filterstrips installed along the creek and its tributaries. This grant will supplement the good conservation work in that area."

Co-Chair of the Copperas Creek steering committee stated "I'm very pleased that the more funds will be available to the landowners on Copperas Creek. It will promote a more sustainable system and result in more conservation practices on the land."

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK TO SEE UPDATES FROM PROJECTS!



In addition to BMPs, the Copperas Creek Watershed Plan includes a public education program with the implementation of a nutrient management forum, signage, a BMP tour, newsletters, and a forestry management workshop. The overall outcome of the project is expected to reduce pollutant loadings of approximately 360 tons of sediment, 413 pounds of phosphorus, and 795 pounds of nitrogen annually.

Contact our office to sign-up! 1st sign-up period goes till May 1st.

ABOUT US....

Rock Island County SWCD Leadership

Elected Directors:

Twila Cederstrom
Gary Blanchard (Chairman)
Nathan Oak (Treasurer/Secretary)
Brian Parkinson (Vice-Chair)
Julie Voelker

Associate Directors:

Sally Ferguson
Bob Westphahl, County Board Rep

Conservation Team

Rich Stewart - Resource Conservationist
Dawn Temple - Administrator
Joe Gates - Conservation Specialist
Ross Smith - Education Coordinator

2020 ELECTION RESULTS

The Rock Island County Soil & Water Conservation District held its annual Election of Directors on Friday, February 28th, 2020 at the USDA Service Center in Milan, IL. Rock Island County landowners/occupiers reelected Gary Blanchard, Brian Parkinson, and Twila Cederstrom to two-year terms as well as Julie Voelker to a one-year term.

NEW FACES



Julie joined the Board of Directors in 2019 when one of our other directors moved out of the county. She was formally elected in February to fulfill the remaining one-year term. We are grateful to her service!

Julie grew up in Kane County. She lived in town and had crops and cattle outside of town. Julie went to the University of

Illinois in Champaign and studied Biology. She states, "I've always had an interest in conservation instilled from my family. My husband and I have enjoyed living in a river community and find the health of our waters and soils to be important not only for the continued productivity of farmlands but also the health of the streams, Mississippi and Gulf of Mexico. We're fortunate in Rock Island county that our actions can have such a large impact."

In November of 2019, RISWCD partnered with the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District to include Ross Smith as the new part-time education coordinator for the District. Ross will be a shared education coordinator for both districts and will be assisting with designing conservation educational programming, outreach, and events. Ross grew up on a family farm in Pike County Illinois producing corn, soybeans, wheat, angus beef cattle and was heavily involved in both 4-H and FFA. Ross completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2014, and then a Masters of Science in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration with a focus in Natural Resources from Western Illinois University in 2018. He enjoys hiking,



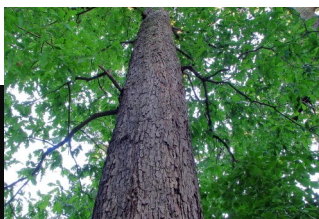
hunting, fishing, photography, bluegrass music and restoring habitat on his family's farm. We are excited to add Ross as part of our team here at the Soil & Water Conservation District and look forward to his efforts to help coordinate and implement our education program.



CONSERVATION EVENTS & SALES

ALL SALES SUPPORT CONSERVATION IN ROCK ISLAND COUNTY!

SPRING TREE, PLANT & FISH SALES



Spring Tree Sales—CANCELLED
Look ahead to fall tree planting— Sale will be held in October.

Spring Plant Sale—POSTPONED
We are hoping to have a walk-in sale in late May or early June. Follow us on facebook for updates!

Spring Fish Sale - AVAILABLE FOR ONLINE SALES ONLY

www.rockislandswcd.org/fish.php

Deadline to Order:

May 1st

Spring Fish Pick-up Date @ QCCA Expo Center parking lot:

Friday, May 8th @ 7am

SPRING SEEDING??

Our 7.5 foot Great Plains No-Drill Seeding Drill is available for rent. It can be used for grain, small seed or native grasses.

Rent our drill for \$100/day + \$12/acre.

Pick-up at SWCD office in Milan.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

GOING NATIVE GARDEN TOUR
PRESENTED BY:

Bi-State Conservation Action Network (BI-CAN)

SATURDAY JULY 18TH, 2020



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Soil and Water Stewardship Week
Is April 26-May 3, 2020

Sale Questions: 309-764-1486 X 3 or info@rockislandswcd.org

CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES

Stormwater Conference Attracts 200 Attendees, Addressing Point-Source Pollution

The Quad Cities Stormwater Committee conducted the 7th Annual Stormwater Conference at Jumer's Hotel and Casino on February 11th. Almost 200 people attended, including representatives from area engineering firms, construction companies, municipal officials, and staff dealing with stormwater issues.

Private partner, Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. presented the morning session, covering the inspection forms used as part of the NPDES permits and a construction site BMP interactive exercise that was both innovative and well received. Other presentations from Dan Salsinger (Hanes Geo), Amy Foster (City of Coralville) and George Ryan (Wood & Associates) rounded out the day of informative and interesting topics focusing on challenges, collaboration and resiliency.

This is the only conference devoted to stormwater concerns in the QC area, it continues to provide insight and strategies for professionals establishing new and improved ways to protect our water, our most valuable resource.



The event showcases RISWCD's capability in partnering with local public and private entities. The QC Stormwater Committee consists of partners from Rock Island SWCD, Cities of Rock Island, Moline, East Moline, Davenport, & Bettendorf, Village of Coal Valley, Rock Island, County Partners of Scott County Watershed, and Christopher B. Burke Engineering. Thanks to a great committee for another successful conference and to all the sponsors, presenters, and attendees for participating!

Pond Clinic a Bubbling Success

February started with a splash with a pond clinic hosted at Quad Cities Western Illinois campus. The room was stocked to capacity with around 100 attendees. Guest speaker Dave Wyffels' presentation was informative for pond owners and enthusiasts alike, while also leaving time for a Q&A session. Attendees had very positive feedback and we hope to host a similar clinic next winter. For specific pond stocking questions and criteria, contact Dave Wyffels with IDNR at David.Wyffels@illinois.gov. The presentation is available at RISWCD by request, but below are some key points:

- A balanced fish population has optimum density of food and space and will produce sustained yields of harvestable-sized fish.
- Clay Soils are important in dam and basin construction
- In planning and construction, the ideal ratio is 10-20 acres of watershed to 1 acre of pond
- Pond Size: 1 acre and larger better, 0.5 acre and smaller not stable
- Minimum Max Depth Requirements: 10 feet in Northern Illinois; 15+ feet desired so fish can overwinter.
- Avoid wind-powered aerators due to the unpredictability of the wind; install an electric powered aerator if needed.

The SWCD spring fish sale is currently underway. Please visit our website to order: www.rockislandswcd.org/fish.php



CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

PRAIRIE STRIPS– A NEW CONTINUOUS CRP PRACTICE

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the Conservation Reserve program (CRP) Continuous Signup. Under the continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive cropland devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled at any time.

Landowners with expiring CRP continuous practices should contact the local FSA office now if they plan to renew their acres. Landowners thinking about enrolling new acres under the CRP, also should contact the FSA office to determine eligibility and practice requirements.

Common practices eligible for continuous CRP include:

- Grassed waterways
- Vegetative and Riparian filterstrips
- Shallow water areas
- Wetland restoration
- Windbreak and shelterbelts
- Field Borders for Upland Wildlife



Introducing Prairie Strips, a new continuous CRP practice. Prairie Strips are similar to the CRP field border practice, but can be applied within the field. Strips can be anywhere from 30 to 120 feet wide. Strips will be seeded to native grasses and forbs. We can even order the seed for you! Contact Rich Stewart for more information on this program.

PROPERTY TAX INCENTIVE FOR FILTER STRIPS



If you have a filter strip on your property, you could potentially lower your property tax rate on the acres in the filter strip by 5/6. A filter strip is an area of grass, wildflowers, or other permanent vegetation placed next to a stream to protect water quality by reducing runoff containing sediments, nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphates, pesticides, and other contaminants. If you have CP-21 or CP-22 practices through the CRP program you would likely be eligible for this property tax reduction. However, any filter strip is eligible. To access the enrollment form visit: <https://www.rockislandswcd.org/programs/filterstrips>. This form must be signed by RISWCD and then submitted to County Supervisor of Assessments. For eligibility questions or if interested in adding a filter strip on your property, contact Rich Stewart.

ARE YOU DOING YOUR PART? WE CAN HELP YOU FIND OUT!

Joe Gates, Conservation Specialist is ready to help you create a conservation plan for your farm!

One of the biggest environmental challenges facing agriculture is how to reduce nutrient loss and runoff. News headlines continue to highlight the effects of runoff containing organic matter and nutrients to the Gulf of Mexico. Midwest agriculture is targeted as a major source of nutrient rich runoff to the area. To address the issue, significant attention and resources have been dedicated to support voluntary solutions. Illinois has adopted the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy with the goal of cutting nitrogen and phosphorus loss by 45%. USDA and Soil & Water Conservation Districts have programs to help plan and pay for conservation practices on your farm.

EQIP, CSP, CRP, and PFC are programs that you can use to apply practices to keep the soil and nutrients on your farm. Solving the nutrient loss problem doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A basic conservation plan that includes simple proven practices can be very effective. Reducing nutrient loss starts with developing a nutrient management plan that is based on regular soil testing and agronomic rates and methods of fertilizer application. This plan should then be supported with conservation practices designed to reduce soil erosion and to filter runoff water. You can use mulch till, no till, and cover crops to reduce runoff, increase organic matter, and capture excess nutrients. Buffer practices like grassed waterways and vegetative filter strips along streams should be used to carry and filter runoff water from your fields. Voluntary conservation is alive and well, but for how long? Let us know if we can be of assistance with your conservation needs.

CONSERVATION NEWS

Improvements to Lake George have been completed



In the fall of 2018 and into the spring of 2019 Lake George, a 167 acre man-made lake, located at Loud Thunder Forest Preserve which is owned and operated by Rock Island County Forest Preserve District (District) received some much overdue improvements. The improvements focused on repairing the water face side of the dam, installation of a dewatering system, and fortifying the spillway exit. The improvements were required by the Office of Water Resources management of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IL DNR) in order to bring the dam and spillway into compliance with that of a Class I dam. The improvements the District performed will allow Lake George to be maintained as a Class I dam and spillway as well as a great fishery into the foreseeable future.

While Lake George was dewatered, the District partnered with the Blackhawk College's Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) and addressed a major project at the Lake George Boat Rental area. Students and the instructors involved in the HCCTP

formed and poured a concrete bulkhead wall that would support an ADA compliant sidewalk for increased accessibility for all users of boat rental service the District provides. It was such a large undertaking that it actually took two classes and to complete the job.

During the construction of the toe and rip rap rock work, the District accomplished another goal of improving the fishery within Lake George. While the lake was dewatered the reduction in of the amount of Gizzard Shad in Lake George occurred. The IL DNR Fish Biologist had predicted a drastic reduction in the overpopulated Gizzard Shad as a result of keeping the lake water level down for a full winter. By leaving the lake water level down below its typical average, the Gizzard Shad who out compete other more desirable sport fish for food had their numbers greatly reduced as they could not hide from the large predator fish in the shallows. The District along with the IL DNR Fish Biologist also placed several structures to act as habitat in popular fishing areas. Then in late October the District held a lake clean-up open to the public on a beautiful Saturday morning. Nearly 150 volunteers walked the banks picking up years of trash and a few treasures lake users had lost over the years. In all, cleanliness and fishing many visitors stated after the lake filled back up was the best they had seen in years.

The District didn't stop there with the improvements, in the summer of 2019, a new dock was installed at the public boat launch to facilitate launching and landing of personal watercrafts on the lake. The District also installed two docks primarily for those wanting to fish. One of the docks has a kayak launch station designed into it to accommodate any kayak skill user. Then another fishing dock was installed at the Lone Cedar Picnic Area for fishing. Moving forward, the District and the staff at Loud Thunder Forest Preserve plan to perform annual maintenance on the spillway and dam as required, evaluate and maintain a great fishery, and enhance the Lake George experience by providing great amenities for public use on Loud Thunder Forest Preserve's Lake George.



Rock Island SWCD Supports S.T.A.R. program

The Rock Island County SWCD continues to promote the S.T.A.R program with area producers and landowners. S.T.A.R. stands for **S**aving **T**omorrow's **A**griculture **R**esources.

S.T. A.R. is a **FREE** state-wide tool to assist farm operators and landowners in evaluating their nutrient and soil loss management practices on individual fields. The goal is to meet the goals of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and promote conservation practices being implemented across the county.

The S.T.A.R. evaluation program assigns points for each cropping, tillage, nutrient application, and soil conserving activity. Higher points are assigned to those practices that align best with the NLRS goals and science assessment. From these points, a rating of one-star to five-star rating is assigned to each field the participate signs up for.

This year, we will be asking participants who receive cost-share funds for conservation practices through either the IDOA Partners for Conservation program or Copperas Creek IEPA grant to complete the S.T.A.R. form for ranking. Each participant will receive a free sign indicating their ranking level on a one to five-star rating.

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Thank you to our RISWCD newsletter sponsors. Their support makes this publication possible.



Rock Island County
Soil and Water Conservation District
3020 1st Ave E
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